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SUBJECT: Changes in Jordan's S&T Establishment Likely to Impact U.S.
Collaboration

REF: A. Amman 1676

[1](#)B. State 71325

[1](#)C. 08 Amman 2154

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: A new Secretary General at the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST), and other changes in Jordan's S&T establishment will challenge us to maintain the momentum under the U.S.-Jordan S&T agreement, which has had mixed success. Jordan's Scientific Research Fund, established in 2008, has accumulated almost \$21 million in its first year, becoming a valuable source of indigenous S&T funding. Jordanian S&T institutions are relatively weak and their standing and influence could be bolstered through timely implementation of S&T plans related to the President's June 4 Cairo speech and regular engagement at more senior levels in the GOJ. End Summary.

Changes in Jordan's S&T Establishment

[1](#)2. (U) The Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) serves as the lead Jordanian government agency for the U.S.-Jordan S&T agreement and hosted the July 2008 S&T Joint Committee Meetings (JCM) in Amman (ref C). Dr. Anwar Battikhi resigned as HCST Secretary General in June 2009, leading to several other changes in Jordan's S&T establishment. Dr. Adel Tweisi, a former Minister of Culture, is the new HCST Secretary General and Omar Hamarneh has been appointed Executive Director for the Al Hassan Science City (AHSC), where HCST, the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), and the Princess Sumaya University of Technology are housed. Princess Sumaya continues in her role as the Chairperson of the AHSC and President of RSS. Since the appointment of Dr. Tweisi, several key HCST staffers who participated in the JCM have also left for unspecified reasons.

New Leadership and New Plans

¶3. (U) Tweisi highlighted during ESTHoff's August 16 meeting, his key priorities for HCST which include developing a National Information System for S&T efforts in Jordan, eventually leading to an S&T Observatory to track and analyze the results of Jordanian S&T efforts. One notable success in Jordan's S&T efforts is the 2008 establishment of a Scientific Research Fund (SRF) under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The SRF receives one percent of the profits of publicly traded companies and in its first year has garnered almost JD15 million (\$21 million) in funding with a significant portion available for research grants. This indigenous funding source could provide a boost to many local scientists. HCST plans to use a SRF grant to help develop Jordan's research strategy over the next ten years and also to provide training for Jordanian scientists on research proposal writing skills.

¶4. (SBU) Hamarneh and Dr. Khaled Khalaleh, Vice President of RSS, elaborated on AHSC plans to enhance the cohesiveness amongst the organizations housed at AHSC. A British contractor (Arap) has been hired to develop a physical plan for AHSC which includes the establishment of a solar array at AHSC to feed into the national grid by March 2010. Special legislation to designate AHSC as a special zone with tax and investment benefits, however, has stalled recently with the Jordanian government apparently suggesting AHSC could be wrapped under the Special Development Zones Commission, a special body created in 2008 to promote investment and economic development in designated zones. RSS also plans to open a new Water Research Center focused on Jordanian water resource issues.

Impact on U.S.-Jordan Collaborative Activities

¶5. (SBU) The July 2008 JCM resulted in the formation of six working groups (WG) (ref C). The energy WG has successfully held two workshops to develop green building envelope standards, the health WG resulted in the signing of a clinical research training agreement between NIH and HCST, and the agricultural WG has produced some collaborative activities as well. The innovation WG expects to hold a technology transfer workshop in Amman in October 2009. However, the education WG has stalled and is likely to be discontinued given a lack of definition by the Jordanian members, and Water and Environment WG will need to regroup following an unsuccessful \$900,000 proposal to USAID.

Follow-Up the President's Cairo Speech

¶6. (U) ESTHoff shared with the scientific community some of the key deliverables outlined in the President's June 4 speech related to entrepreneurship and S&T and sought feedback from HCST, RSS, and AHSC (ref B). Some of their suggestions include:

- An initiative for the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) to establish a regional science and technology training center in Jordan through a partnership with HCST, RSS, and the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology. (This was originally proposed during the JCM);
- Developing centers of excellence in the fields of biomedical research (a confluence of Jordanian strengths in the IT and medical fields);
- Promoting research opportunities in advanced materials such as nanotechnology; and
- Promoting opportunities for SME establishment in Jordan in partnership with U.S. based organizations seeking outsourcing opportunities.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Tweisi is the third HCST Secretary General in the last two years. The frequent turnover at HCST and the departure of many key JCM participants does not bode well for continuity and follow-through. Tweisi appeared more focused on future AHSC plans and developing a National S&T Information System for Jordan than on providing additional momentum to the JCM and the WGs. Our S&T collaboration with HCST will require a "re-set." It will be critical to maintain momentum in the WGs that have produced successful results, although the outcomes will likely continue to be mixed given the lack of dedicated funding and their self initiating structures. Fortunately, our strong bilateral S&T collaboration extends beyond HCST and the AHSC to many other establishments in

Jordan such as the Jordan University for Science and Technology. There is also strong momentum outside of the JCM framework in water, environment, energy, and health issues based on USAID and other USG initiatives. Nevertheless, the S&T establishment in Jordan continues to play second fiddle to many other government agencies and frequent HCST turn-over and the lack of legislative support for AHSC plans is also indicative of the relative weakness of S&T institutions. Prompt implementation of S&T plans related to the President's speech could help alter this situation and discussions at a more senior level of the GOJ can help to ensure adequate buy-in and a commitment for long-term sustainability. End Comment.

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